

Aripiprazole

This sheet is about exposure to aripiprazole in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

What is aripiprazole?

Aripiprazole is medication used to treat schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, autism spectrum disorders, and depression. It is sold under the brand names Abilify®, Abilify Discmelt®, Aristada®, and Abilify Maintena®.

Sometimes when people find out they are pregnant, they think about changing how they take their medication, or stopping their medication altogether. However, it is important to talk with your healthcare providers before making any changes to how you take this medication. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about the benefits of treating your condition and the risks of untreated illness during pregnancy.

I take aripiprazole. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?

Studies have not been done to see if taking aripiprazole could make it harder to get pregnant.

Does taking aripiprazole increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. Based on the studies reviewed, it is not known if aripiprazole increases the chance for miscarriage. One study looking at the use of aripiprazole in pregnancy showed an increased chance for miscarriage, but others have not. Untreated or under-treated psychiatric illness can also increase the chance for miscarriage.

Does taking aripiprazole increase the chance of birth defects?

Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. Based on the studies reviewed, it is not known if aripiprazole increases the chance for birth defects above the background risk. Two small studies and one large study did not show an increased chance for birth defects when aripiprazole was taken during pregnancy.

Does taking aripiprazole in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?

Based on the studies reviewed, it is not known if aripiprazole can cause other pregnancy-related problems, such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth). There are studies that reported a slightly increased chance of preterm birth and babies who were born smaller than expected. In these studies, aripiprazole was taken for a short time. The underlying illness being treated may also lead to the increased chance of these pregnancy complications.

I need to take aripiprazole throughout my entire pregnancy. Will it cause withdrawal symptoms in my baby after birth?

There have been reports of babies exposed to aripiprazole during late pregnancy who had withdrawal symptoms after birth. Symptoms of withdrawal can include jitteriness, breathing problems, shaking, sleepiness, eating problems, rigid muscles, or low muscle tone. Because of the lack of studies, it is not known if the chance of this happening is high or low. In some babies the symptoms will go away quickly, while other babies may need treatment in the hospital to recover. Babies who have been exposed to aripiprazole during pregnancy can be watched for signs of withdrawal after delivery.

Does taking aripiprazole in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?

Based on the studies reviewed, it is not known if aripiprazole increases the chance for behavior or learning issues for the child.

Breastfeeding while taking aripiprazole:

A limited number of studies have shown that when up to 15 mg of aripiprazole a day is taken by the person who is breastfeeding, the medication passes into breastmilk in small amounts. While there have been cases of babies becoming sleepier than usual, most breastfed babies exposed to aripiprazole have no reported symptoms.

When taking any psychotropic medication while breastfeeding, it is important to watch the baby for symptoms such as sleepiness or trouble eating. If you suspect the baby has any symptoms, such as too much sleepiness or trouble eating, contact the child's healthcare provider right away.

Aripiprazole may lower the amount of milk your body makes. Your healthcare provider can help you decide what treatment is best for you and your baby. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

If a male takes aripiprazole, could it affect fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects?

Studies have not been done to see if aripiprazole could affect male fertility or increase the chance of birth defects above the background risk. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase the risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/>.

National Pregnancy Registry for Psychiatric Medications: There is a pregnancy registry for women who take psychiatric medications, such as aripiprazole. For more information you can look at their website: <https://womensmentalhealth.org/research/pregnancyregistry/>.

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